For the die hard enthusiast of Japanese hobby culture

RAIJIN GAME & ANIME

雷神

STRAIGHT FROM NIPPON!

ISSUE 3

押井守 OSHII MAMORU
The Return:
Some familiar topics for his fans

NIGHTOW YASUHIRO 内藤泰弘
Trigun fever!

Special Feature
THE CREATORS' CHAT ROOM

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Exclusive info from SEGA: Focus on games, anime, & more!

RAIJIN GAME & ANIME

Editor's Message

Welcome to the world of RAIJIN Game & Anime!!

RAIJIN Game & Anime is the sister publication to RAIJIN COMICS, the first ever weekly manga anthology in the United States filled with hit titles from the most famous authors in Japan. As an added bonus, if you subscribe to RAIJIN COMICS, you'll get a copy of RAIJIN Game & Anime, free! It's an offer you can't miss. You can also get it at your local comic book store.

If you're hooked on Japanese manga, anime and games - the top three forms of entertainment in the land of the rising sun - this magazine is a must for you. It gives you the latest news from the leading country of anime and game culture, right at your fingertips - information you can't get anywhere else! After finishing this magazine, you will know and be up-to-date on Japanese entertainment. There are several magazines on Japanese video games and anime information in the U.S. However, RAIJIN Game & Anime is distinct in that it is written and edited in Japan based on local information. It is created by a top team of otaku reporters and editors and is full of otaku information written by otaku writers for the otaku fans out there.

This is the only magazine where you'll find an exclusive interview with Oshii Mamoru, a legendary anime director who needs no introduction! He talks about topics never discussed before! You'll find out a lot more in these twenty pages than you will ever find anywhere else!

We also welcome any comments, questions and opinions you may have about either magazine so please let us know how you feel!

Happy reading!

RAIJIN Game & Anime Editorial Team

RAIJIN GAME & ANIME

TM

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COVER STORY

Major Kusanagi Motoko returns to the anime scene this fall on Japanese TV. Check out Anime Focus on p.6 for the scoop on this *gaiden* version of the film that focuses on the activities of Section 9 in a world without the Puppet Master!

Illustrated by Makoto Shimomura
3DFX by Makoto Endo

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Today's Topics

Topic #1 CINEMA

ALL MOVIES, ALL NIGHT!

The 18th **Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival** was held once again at that mecca of Japanese subculture, Shibuya, between October 25th and November 1st. Initially held in 1985 as an event supporting The Tokyo International Film Festival, this yearly gathering features a diverse panel of guests and an array of subevents. Having been rearranged into a series of primarily all-night film screenings, this year's festival provided an opportunity to enjoy a myriad films and subevents on an even deeper level.

Spanning a variety of genres, the film entries featured at the festival included those representing the categories of SF, horror, and fantasy. Continuous screenings of overseas features such as those from Hong Kong and India demonstrated the potential for a new wave of interest in films from these regions.

Of particular interest was the lineup of films screened on October 27th, which consisted mainly of anime and SFX-based features. Under the banner "Celebrating 20 Years of Emotion: A Moai Festival of Love and Peace," Bandai Visual exhibited a dazzling lineup of new anime titles, including "Macross Zero," "Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex," "The Big O" and ".hack." (The trademark image of Emotion, one of the Bandai Visual labels, is represented by the Moai Statues of Easter Island.) RAIJIN G&A will be providing full coverage of these features in upcoming issues.

The **Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival** truly served to bring out the anime *otaku* in all of those lucky enough to attend.

The latest entry in the "Macross" series, "Macross Zero," was shown.

RAIJIN G&A has its eyes on "Aragami," also shown at the festival. This sword-action feature surpassing the expectations placed on films from Japan was directed by Kitamura Ryuhei, who studied film in Australia from the age of 17. Kitamura is also slated to direct the upcoming film version of the popular manga "Azumi."

Topic #2 ANIME

THE ANIME PRODUCTION SCENE IN A NUTSHELL!

Work is now under way on the next installment in the "Animation Seisaku Shinko Kuromi-Chan" series, tentatively entitled **Kuromi-Channel**. The original work, which painted a picture of the Japanese animation industry, represented an independent project released only in Akihabara stores. Nonetheless, its reception has been tremendous, having gone on to win an award at the New Tokyo International Anime Fair. It has also been made into a manga and has subsequently seen nationwide release on both VHS and DVD formats. Apparently, the DVD version is also scheduled for North American release!

Check out our reviews of both **Kuromi-Chan** and **Kuromi-Chan 2** in the Anime Focus section of an upcoming issue of RAIJIN G&A!

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THE RAVE AND *OTAKU* SCENES COLLIDE AT THIS HIGH-INTENSITY EVENT!

On October 18th, the exclusive rave event known as **Otaku Speed Vibe** was held for the second time. The first one, which took place on March 1st, had an atmosphere like an underground rave party but incorporated the presence of the famous Speedfreak, otherwise known as Martin Damm, from Germany. This latest event featured guest DJ Megaten Hosoe, a.k.a. Hosoe Shinji, known for his work on the soundtracks for hit Namco titles such as "Ridge Racer" and "Tekken." It goes without saying that the crowd went nuts.

The music pumping throughout the hall was that loud *otaku*-oriented techno variation out of Holland known as Nerdcore, infamous for including samples from obscure game and anime titles. This techno genre of succeeds in fusing both intensity and hardcore elements while ensuring that melody is maintained where it counts. Flashes of scenes from the likes of "Gundam" and "Macross" on screens within the event area only served to further intensify the frantic visages of anime already generated by the Nu-Style, slow-tempo BPMs and upbeat pop sounds surpassing those of standard trance in the air.

Details on this and future **Otaku Speed Vibe** events can be found at: http://www.otakuspeedvibe.jp

GROUP CHAT!

Q. How old are you guys?
We're all 20.
Q. How many times have you been to this event?
This is our first time. We saw a flyer at school and decided to check it out.
Q. Do you consider yourselves *otaku*?
(Laugh uncontrollably.) Not yet, but we might be pretty soon.
Q. What anime do you like?
We like the old-school stuff, like "Gaogaigar."

PROJECT GABBANGELION

Sponsoring **Otaku Speed Vibe** and a host of other rave parties in Japan is DJ Sharpnel (Check out http://www.sharpnel.com). His album pictured here, the October-released "PROJECT GABBANGELION: EARLY STYLE OF OTAKU SPEED VIBE 1996-1998," incorporates intense Gabba sounds.

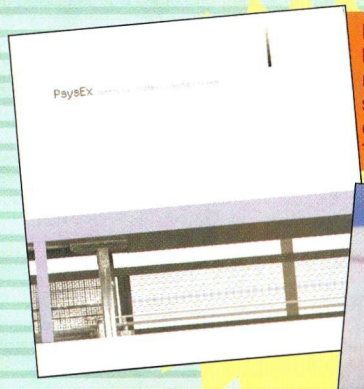
THE AMBIENT MUSIC OF RYOONDO: CAPTURING THE *OTAKU* ESSENCE

On November 24th, ambient music label **Ryoondo-Tea** released the latest PsysEx-production "polyrhythm_system exclusive massage," a culmination of superior musical artistry. While simultaneously headlining a number of artists, the cutting-edge PsysEx, a.k.a. Ito Ken'ichi, is also noted for experimental and creative solo efforts that include live ambient performances in temples.

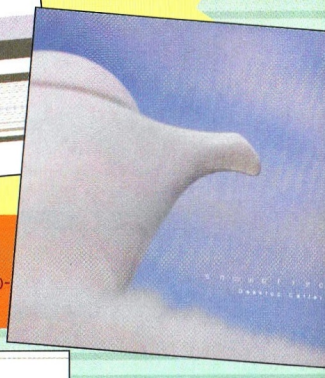
The highlights of this CD are not limited to the featured artist and his music alone. **Ryoondo-Tea**, the label responsible for the album's release, is currently sponsoring a series of events under the label "ambient-tea" that fuse the spirit of a Japanese tea ceremony with the environmental music ambient represents to create a concept based on "the elements of tea and Zen inherent within electronic culture." An example of this is the party event "SakuraChillOut," in which seating used in a traditional tea ceremony is actually brought into the club.

At the center of **Ryoondo-Tea** is Hoshi Ken'ichiro, who along with his regular participation in the music scene is also responsible for producing Kichijoji Anime Wonderland (covered in last week's issue) and the New York-Tokyo Music Festival. Together with founding member of Studio 4°C, director of "Memories Episode 1" and close friend Morimoto Koji, Hoshi was also behind the event "ambient DES."

Since having been strongly impressed by the demo coding and *otaku* youth of Northern Europe and influenced by *otaku* culture as a whole, Hoshi has been intense in his research and incorporation of *otaku*-produced music and visuals. This is a sign that there's a lot more in store for us from the **Ryoondo-Tea** camp. Keep your eyes open!



PsysEx brings ambient back home to its environmental roots with the almost primal sounds of "polyrhythm_system exclusive message" (Ryoondo-Tea DES014; released 11/14).



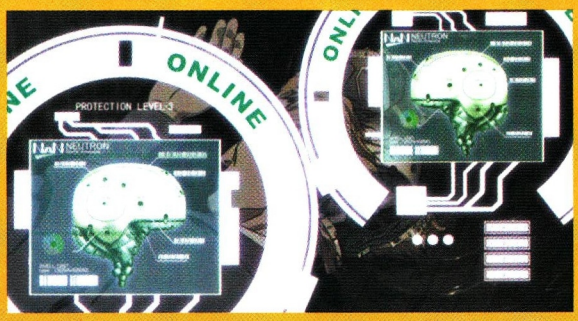
The latest album by Hoshi's musical unit snoweffect, "Desktop Caffeine" (Ryoondo-Tea DES013).

Check out **Ryoondo-Tea**'s official website for details on related music and events at: http://www1.ttcn.ne.jp/~ryoondo

Ghost in the Shell stand alone complex

Television Series

攻殻機動隊 STAND ALONE COMPLEX



DATA
SkyPerfect TV PPV (Pay-Per-View) 2 episodes/ ¥800
URL●http://www.production-ig.com/Ghost_TV.html

A NEW KOKAKU WORLD DEBUTS IN A TV SERIES

"Kokakukidotai" is manga artist Shirow Masamune's masterpiece, a SF-action manga. Set in the near future, it tells the story of a cyborg corps, the *Kokakukidotai*, set up to fight crime. In 1994, with Oshii Mamoru directing, it was turned into a theatrical animated release titled "Ghost in the Shell: Kokakukidotai." It became a hit, particularly among those who enjoy imagery, because of its novel stylistics. In North America, the DVD sold over a million copies, and in August 1996 it became the first Japanese release to hit No. 1 on the Billboard Chart. In Japan and worldwide, the movie was a smash hit, and became known as a masterpiece of Japanese animation.

THE GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX, a new project based on the same "Kokakukidotai" manga, will intrigue with 26 episodes.

The series is based on the premise of Section 9 in a parallel world where Kusanagi Motoko never met the Puppet Master, although the basic world is the same as that in the movie version. As the title implies, the story will feature people who intentionally try to break away from the worldwide Net. It is the first TV series in the world to be produced that utilizes 5.1 sound channels. DVDs of the series are also planned.

The young Director Kamiyama Kenji is a former student of Oshii's. "We're producing this series with a staff even younger than the one which made the movie," said Kamiyama. These newcomers are under the pressure of high expectations, and Oshii said of Kamiyama, "If I get the chance, I'll crush him (laughs)." With forces like this at work, the series is sure to attract interest!

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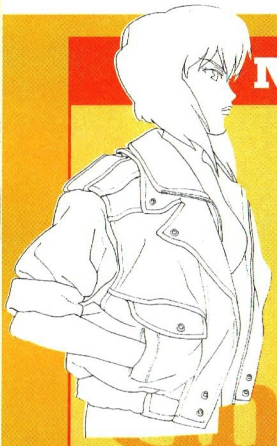
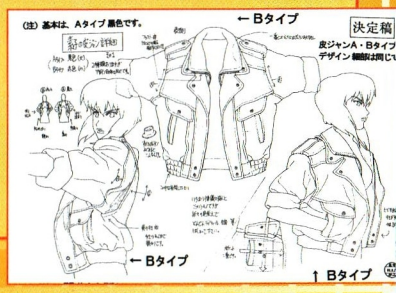
Maj. KUSANAGI MOTOKO



A member of Section 9. In Section 9, the chain of command among the group members is largely unclear, but Kusanagi, as the most skilled member, and is generally considered to be the conduit for transmitting Aramaki's orders to the others. Aside from part of her brain and spinal cord, her entire body is robotic—the consummate cyborg. Although little is known of her past, the fact that she rates the handle "Major" suggests she has seen military service.



A THIRD KOKAKU DIFFERENT FROM BOTH THE MANGA AND THE MOVIE

The year is 2030 A.D. Man has found a way to transform thoughts into light and electrons and send them through the Net, but has not yet formed a collective conscience—every man still stands alone.

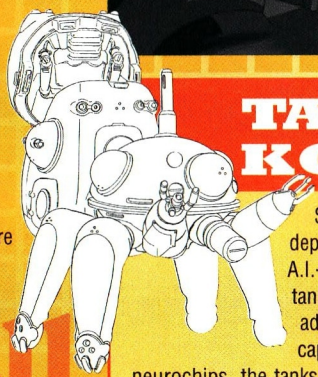
STAND ALONE COMPLEX is set in the same world as that of the manga and theater versions, but the creator himself says, "This 'Kokakukidotai' is the one that everyone's been looking forward to," with the difficult original story having been made easier to understand.

At ¥800 million, the **STAND ALONE COMPLEX** budget is double that of a regular TV series. With plenty of CG to supplement the regular animation, it all fits together seamlessly, aided by superb visual quality. In fact, the quality of the series, which rivals that of the theater version, is so high that fans are already worrying that the level can't be kept. An animated series like this, shot entirely in HD full digital with high-vision quality, vista size and 5.1 channel sound, is considerably unique, and is sure to be a success.

Now for a look at the anime itself. The members of the elite corps known as Section 9 are skilled at physical combat, but their forte is computer warfare. With the story now easier to understand, newbies can catch on with a minimum of effort. The extent of cyber warrior abilities becomes obvious early on. In the first episode, the focus is placed on the abduction of a high-ranking government official, and we are introduced to a world of crime in which cyborgs are common. In the second episode, we get some great *mecha* action very reminiscent of "Patlabor," with all the A.I. battle tanks anyone could want. In the manga and movie, these tanks were called *Fuchikoma*, but here they're *Tachikoma*, and *mecha* fans are already salivating. In this storyline plotting that Shirow himself took part in, the members of Section 9 have never met up with the Puppet Master. Great care has also been taken to preserve the flair and flavor of the original.

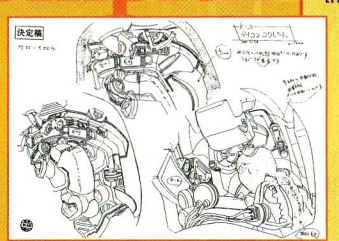
The music throughout the series was entirely composed by Kanno Yoko, whose cool sound so fascinated fans of "Cowboy Be-Bop." Kanno says that she wanted to infuse "this logical animation with flashes of heat and unexpected madness."

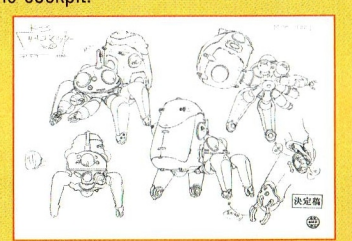
STAND ALONE COMPLEX is different from both the manga and the movie. It is, in effect, a third "Kokaku." In the next year, things are definitely going to heat up for "Kokaku" fans, who won't want to miss a second of this series.



TACHI KOMA

Section 9 can deploy nine small A.I.-equipped battle tanks. Possessing advanced A.I. capabilities thanks to neurochips, the tanks can move and operate independently. They're loaded with chain guns and grenade launchers, and can also be controlled by pilots in the cockpit.





SPECIAL FEATURE

THE CREATORS' CHAT ROOM #1

A PASSION FOR DETAIL

クリエイター● 押井守 おしいまもる

OSHII MAMORU

"SHOOTING A FOREIGN-LANGUAGE FILM HAS BEEN A DREAM OF MINE"

The renowned anime director Oshii Mamoru's latest work, "Avalon Grey Lady," is surprisingly live-action. Here we discuss to Oshii about the aim of this film and discuss some of his earlier works.

Q. Tell us about the story of "Avalon."

Well, you know subtitles sometimes appear in films. I really like subtitles and have been fascinated by the process of reading them while watching a movie. For a while, I've had the idea of making a movie in a foreign language with Japanese subtitles. It's been an ambition of mine to shoot such a film, and now this dream has come true.

Q. Why did you chose Polish for the film?

Over the years, I've seen a number of Polish movies and been struck by the beautiful sound of the language. In languages like English, German, or French, I can understand the meaning of certain words, and this would spoil the effect I was looking for. But since I don't understand a single word of Polish, it was the perfect otherworldly language for me.

Q. When we saw "Avalon," even though it's subtitled, we got the impression that we were listening to the lines being spoken as we read the subtitles.

The script for **"Avalon"** has a lot of kanji and is full of information, and the best way to convey this meaning is through text. In language, I think there are sound words and sight words, and I prefer words that can be seen.

I wrote the rough draft for the subtitles, and I had to struggle with the space limitations, but now I have a much better appreciation of the amazing skills needed to translate films (laughs). Considering how much time it took me to write my own lines, I can't imagine how difficult it must be to translate someone else's.

Q. There seem to be lots of specialized terms.

If someone with general knowledge from 30 years ago were to see "Stand Alone Complex" or "Avalon," there would certainly be a lot they wouldn't understand. Since people today have a basic understanding of games and computers, they can find this material interesting. But it still places some demands on their knowledge. Some things also require an understanding of the past. The original idea for "Avalon," for instance, comes from the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. I'm not sure if young people today know much about what went on in Hungary at the time. In fact, people familiar with this history are certainly the exception these days.

WORK 1

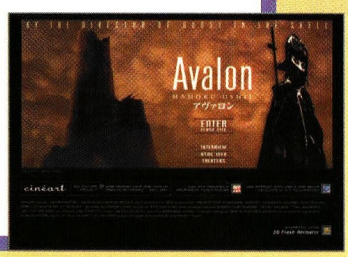
AVALON

The film depicts a desolate future world where gamers are absorbed in an illegal virtual-reality game called "Avalon." A top-level player, Ash, meets an enigmatic man named Bishop, and the story follows their search for the mysteries hidden within the game. The film includes impressive battle scenes filmed with actual army weapons thanks to the cooperation of the Polish army. "Avalon" combines real-life footage and computer graphics, with everything digitalized to create mysterious, unprecented imagery.

OFFICIAL SITE

http://www.avalon-movie.com

The official website of "Avalon" includes stills from the movie and production anecdotes, and and interviews with Oshii Mamoru. The site can be read in three languages — English, Norwegian, and French — and key words are highlighted, so unknown words can be undeerstood by comparing them to each other. Looking at the same sentence in a different languages highlights the great diversity of language.



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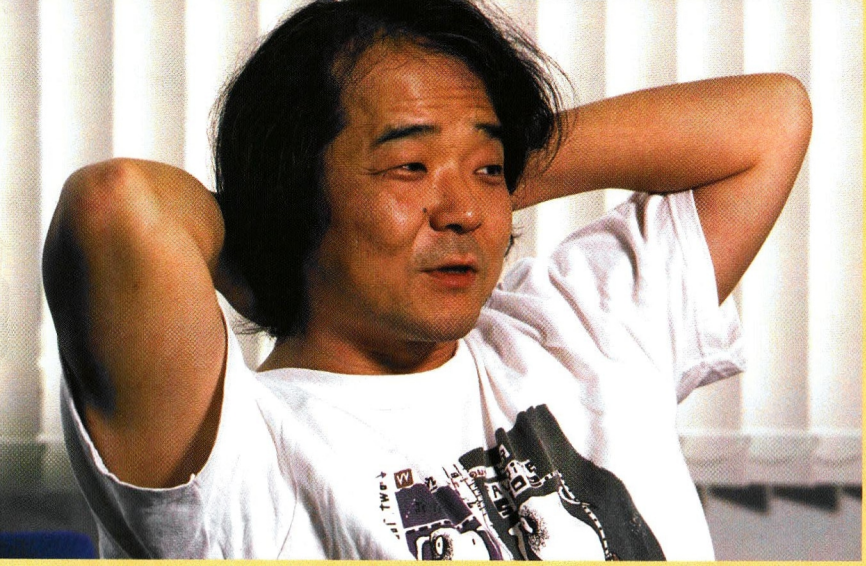


PROFILE

Oshii Mamoru has directed "Patlabor: The Mobile Police," "Ghost in the Shell," "Jin-Roh," and other films. Oshii's own interests are clearly reflected in the film "Avalon." Fans already know that he is a ardent dog lover, and the character Ash also has a dog. Likewise, the weapons in the film reflect his military interest. Oshii is also a fan of game software, and the main characters' names — Ash, Bishop, and Murphy — were chosen to pay homage to the game "Wizardry."

OFFICIAL SITE

http://www.oshiimamoru.com

"IN MY WORK, I HAVE HAD TO EXPAND THE CONCEPT OF ANIME"

Q. "Avalon" seems to have used even more digital technology than "Ghost in the Shell."

Speaking of digitalization, compared to "**Avalon**," my more intricate animated films were probably ten times more labor-intensive. Not many people get a chance to work on time-consuming anime like "Ghost in the Shell," and most of them are getting old. Even if people want to make an animated film, there is often no place to do it. Maybe I need to start looking for another line of work (laughs).

I have no intention of becoming a straight live-action film director, so I figured I would have to come up with another type of film. This is why I started working on "Avalon." Without expanding the concept of anime into real life, there was no way for me create a space to work in. So the problem I faced was how to do my own work without relying on animators so much. That's when I turned to digital technology.

Once you start using the technology, it's interesting but very time-consuming. Naturally this meant that compared to most of my films, the overall amount of work increased. For "Avalon," I ended up doing twice as much work as usual. From the perspective of cost, this was a worst-case scenario. In terms of budget and time, "Avalon" was the equivalent of two typical anime or live-action films.

I used this time-consuming method to expand the boundaries of anime. I actually wanted to make a much simpler film, but the only way to do this was to actually spend more time working. It doesn't have the marketability of a typical live-action film, but even if I tried to make a romantic film about youth, who would go to see it? No one, of course.

Even if I set out to make a live-action film in Japan today, it would be hard to come up with ideas. In Japan, it's simply not possible to drive tanks through the streets or fly helicopters around. There is no way to film rifles in the cities. Since it is basically a waste of time to make a live-action film in Japan, I had no choice but to go to Poland. And if it wasn't possible there, I would have gone to the Czech Republic or Romania.

In "Avalon," I made a live-action film, but the preparation took much longer than for an anime. For example, when I saw the actual scenes of tanks in action, I was thrilled because it was exactly what I was looking for. But considering the preparation time, it's hard to say whether it was worth the effort. Plus, without uploading this film onto the computer for editing, I couldn't have achieved the exact effect I was looking for.

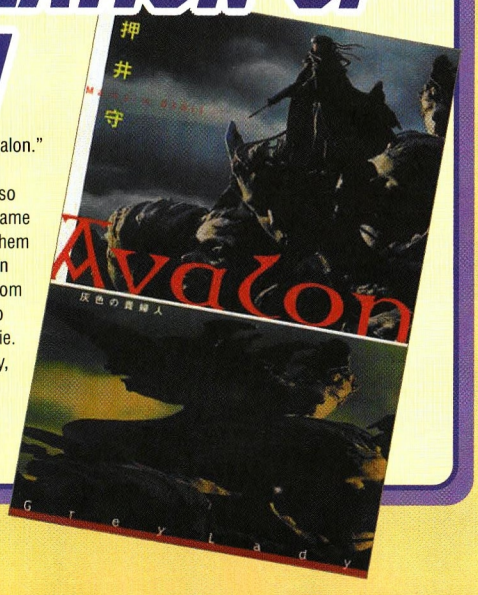
When I think of the movies that I want to make, I can't help feeling a little exasperated, since it requires an endless amount of work. But at the same time, movies that are the product of intense labor often do well financially.

I realized from all this that I'll need to work just as hard on the next movie. Objectively speaking, I'm the sort of director who gets great satisfaction from coming up with more and more intricate ways to create movies. It's just the way I am, and I have to accept it. If I were asked whether I dislike working, I would certainly have to say no.

WORK 2

NOVELIZATION OF AVALON

Oshii Mamoru has also novelized "Avalon." In the novel, he details background information about such things as why so many people became addicted to the game Avalon, or why it's so humiliating for them to reset the game in mid-play. The main character's name is Marcks, but Ash from the movie also appears in the novel, so for fans it is a continuation of the movie. The film is being sold by Media Factory, but is difficult to obtain because it is out of print.



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The series starting with "The Red Spectacles" depicts a parallel Japanese history in which postwar Japan is the turbulent setting for battles between antigovernment forces and the police and army that bring the country to a state of near civil war.

Tachiguishi: Appears in the alternative Japan history. A pro at the art of "dine and ditch". In the confused postwar period, he sweet-talks restaurant owners into letting him eat for free. He also shows up in "Patlabor" and "Urusei Yatsura."

"FOR OTAKU, DETAILS ARE EVERYTHING"

Q. I want to ask you about other live-action films you made, starting with "The Red Spectacles." As you know, there are some hardcore fans of this film in Japan.

I think that fans who are only familiar with "Ghost in the Shell" would be shocked. Recently the French version of "The Red Spectacles" was released. Some French people seem to have found out about me through "Ghost in the Shell" and then saw "Jin-Roh." After that, they became interested in the origin of "Jin-Roh" and checked out "The Red Spectacles." A French distribution company noticed this and offered to carry this film. I was like, "Did you really see it? Are you sure you didn't just see the poster (laughs)!?"

The same is true in Japan. There are many people who know "Jin-Roh" but don't know about the live-action films "The Red Spectacles" and "Kerberos." For me, I can't say which is more interesting. At any rate, I didn't want to make a live-action film in the same way as an anime.

I was very curious to hear the reaction from the audience who saw "The Red Spectacles." I thought it might not meet their expectations, but the response was surprisingly favorable. Encouraged by this, I made "Kerberos," but this ended up being a financial disaster. I realize that it was a bit of an amateurish attempt.

The fact that some fans are obsessed with "Kerberos" is more than anything due to the protective gear used in the film. Without this, it wouldn't have left much of an impression. This made me aware of the value of merchandising. Although it has little to do with the film itself, certain fans were also drawn to "Kerberos" because of the protective gear and machine guns I incorporated simply because I like them. I found out my *otaku*-ness actually has market value.

I think fans of my movies are a minority, since they don't feature beautiful women or handsome leading men. The reason they have done well is that my own interests, such as guns and tanks, have a universal appeal to *otaku*. I was fortunate to have such interests.

For an otaku, details are everything — maybe you could call it an abnormal passion.

A while back, I went to an anime conference in Europe. The presenters at the conference for some reason knew things about me from my student days (laughs). I have no idea why, since I never talked about it. I guess they found out from the Internet — the intelligence network out there is pretty scary. No matter how much personal information they gather about me, that really has nothing to do with my work. But for many people, the personal profile of a director is one detail they like to focus on.

Some of my works are not so much movies, as — how can I put it? I guess a kind of commodity for the consumption of details. Certainly animated films that encourage such consumption are important. For some, the more complicated a film is, the more full of details it is, the better. Collecting such details has its charm.

PROTECTIVE GEAR

In response to the worsening crime situation and armed antigovernment organizations, a special police unit is outfitted with protective gear. The unit is also equipped with night-vision goggles and gas masks, and armed with machine guns and other heavy firepower. The German military style of the police unit, with their masers, reflects Oshii's taste. The protective gear symbolizes the series beginning with "The Red Spectacles."

Currently it is hard to get copies of "The Red Spectacles" and "Kerberos," but in 2003 they will be released on DVD.

WORK 3
ORIGINAL COMICS

Oshii also created the original manga, which was highly praised by military buffs and others. The two comics on the right are particularly popular, and both were published by Kadokawa Shoten.

Oshii on the topic of manga: "It doesn't take a long time for a manga artist's idea to be realized as a picture. But it's really hard to work with manga artists. Both manga artists and film directors are pretty twisted individuals, and it's a miracle when the two can work together."

STRAY DOG

A film with the same world view as "Jin-Roh." It depicts a Japan overrun by antigovernment forces, focusing on the activities and politics of a special police unit called Kerberos.

SEIBU SHINJUKU BATTLE LINE

This is the story of a young man who is posted to a reserve tank unit in a Japan split by civil war.

Gunfight Movies: Movies in which guns play the leading role. Perhaps because guns are restricted in Japan, people here have been indifferent to these kind of films – a situation that Oshii finds funny.

"Killers": To encourage the sort of gun movies that have typically been snubbed in Japan, an annual Gunfight Movie Competition has been held. Two of the prizewinners, and three other directors including Oshii, combined to make this omnibus film. Scheduling is to be announced in 2003.

"MY NEXT MOVIE WILL EXPLORE MY INTERESTS IN AN EROTIC DIRECTION"

Q. Tell us about your next work, "Killers".

Well, we've already finished shooting, and it was done for very little money. Granted, the film is only about 20 minutes long, but it's still the smallest budget I've ever worked with. It's an omnibus that includes five stories. The budget was low, but the directors were able to shoot what they wanted to.

To be perfectly honest, considering how busy I am these days, it really wasn't a good time for me to shoot a gunfight movie (laughs). But I rearranged my schedule and we shot it in just two days. This is a film of my fetishes. But it certainly wasn't just done as a hobby. In fact, I was very serious about the film, and I wanted to make sure I only filmed exactly what I wanted to.

Sometimes I think that the best part about making movies is trying to see how much can be done on a low budget – maxing your resources, maybe. Sometimes without using a little ingenuity, it is easy to forget what one was making in the first place. I don't have any problem with the idea of low-budget movies.

My one extravagance was a ¥1 million rifle that was made for the film. That took up a bit of the budget (laughs). But since the gun is the star of the film, it made sense to shell out the cash for it. Because of this, however, the editing had to be done on a volunteer basis. I even worked for free (laughs). This made it interesting. I think there must be people in Japan who want to see a gunfight movie, and hopefully directors will emerge who want to make such films.

The fact that a director like me can make such a cheap movie is one good thing about making films in Japan. In Hollywood, making low-budget films only lowers your reputation, so it's frowned upon. But there is certainly something to be said for writing a script in one night, shooting the film in two or three days, and then quickly editing it.

Q. Could you tell us about your future plans and say a few words to your fans?

These days I'm focusing on animated work. I won't tell you the title, but it is the second part of a certain anime movie, and it should be released in 2004.

This film is really pushing the envelope. I want to use all the technology available, and it'll be different from the animated films that I've made up to now. Hopefully, people will enjoy this new direction. I'm going to try to make an erotic film – maybe my first movie that isn't violent (laughs). When I made "Avalon," I realized that I was a director of my personal fetishes. Thanks to digital technology, I was able to come close to creating my ideal images, and make the sort of things that I wanted to see. It's clear to me now that I made films because I wanted to see tanks, helicopters, or a girl's ankle, so I don't have any excuse. My next will also be an exploration of my own fetishes. I hope people will like it.

–Thank you very much for talking with us.

(INTERVIEW by KANAMOTO TARO)

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SPECIAL FEATURE

THE CREATORS' CHAT ROOM #2

A LOVE FOR ACTION

クリエイター● 内藤泰弘 ないとうやすひろ

NIGHTOW YASUHIRO

GETTING PAID TO DRAW COMICS: THE NATURAL RISE OF A MANGA ARTIST

Hot on the heels of our exclusive interview with Oshii Mamoru, RAIJIN G&A brings you the scoop on "Trigun" creator Nightow Yasuhiro! We sat down with this talented artist whose design accomplishments in manga, video games, and action figures have made him a legend. In this interview, Nightow-san gives us the lowdown on his background and pecularities as a creator.

Q. Let's start with manga, where the majority of your work lies. What inspired you to get into the medium?

I've was drawing manga since I was a kid, and finally started putting out an original *dojinshi* around 1989. In the process, I just happened to cross paths with a number of editors.

Q. Were you scouted or something?

Hardly. In the beginning, we just became friends. What happened later was that someone came to me with the job of putting together a manga for the arcade game "Samurai Spirits" ("Samurai Shodown" in the West), for which a console port was scheduled.

At the time, I was actually a regular white-collar employee but the idea of working my way up in the company and succeeding never really sank in. This is what led me to quit and become a manga artist. Of course, I had to convince my parents that there were people actually coming to me with work (laughs). I guess you could say I became a manga artist almost naturally.

After making one complete comic book, I set out to create a serial comic that would be extensive enough to convert into a series of *tankobon* (a small book of manga in a volume series). While working on that, it dawned on me: "Guess it's OK to make money and support yourself drawing comic books, huh?" It was a very pleasant realization.

WORK 1 COMICS

Arguably the most recognized work by Nightow Yasuhiro, "Trigun" depicts the struggle between Vash the Stampede, a gunman with a tender heart, and Millions Knives, who is bent on destroyingmankind. The heart-stopping firefights between Vash and the minions of Millions Knives, made hotter by a myriad of special weapons and abilities, have rocked manga fans in Japanback on their heels!

TRIGUN

The source material for the anime, this initial entry in the "Trigun" series was published in three volumes by Tokuma Shoten and subsequently rereleased as two volumes by Shonengahosha.

TRIGUN MAXIMUM

A name change accompanied a switch in the series' serial magazine. Vash's struggle reaches new depth and intensity in this Shonengahosha offering, now on its 8th volume.

HOW A GUN MOVES, SOUNDS, DISCHARGES, AND FLASHES IS ALSO THE KEY TO ACTION

Q. In the U.S., when Trigun comes up, everyone thinks of the anime.

The plan to make "Trigun" into an anime series existed even before "Trigun Maximum" began. Having had a chance to meet with an anime producer, I threw the idea of a "Trigun" anime out in the open without any real expectation that it was going to happen. Next thing you know, plans for a "Trigun" TV anime were under way (laughs).

Q. Looks like the anime version of Trigun is on its way to becoming a hit in the States.

That's because anime has so much potential to begin with. By simply dubbing the voices into English, most of the original content will be understood overseas. With manga, the nature of frame partitioning and drawn lettering differs from country to country. I consider my manga to be on the more difficult side. Had the manga version of "Trigun" been exported first, I doubt that the potential for the series to become a hit would have been there. The success of "Trigun" in the U.S. lies largely with the staff who put together the animated version — in other words, someone besides me.

Q. Your works often exude an aura similar to that of American comics. Do you think this explains the success of "Trigun" in the U.S.?

I have to be honest when I say at first I had little to no experience with American comics. I found myself more infatuated with toys from the U.S. actually, like the "Spawn" ones.

Right before my debut as a manga artist, I had my first real exposure to comics from the States. A friend of mine showed me a copy of "X-Men" by Jim Lee, the same guy who I heard created Magneto. I thought the actions of the various characters were very cool indeed, dispelling my earlier impression that the presentation in American comics was dated. From then on I have been a regular reader of comics from the U.S.

But, I have to say that I don't think that U.S. fans of "Trigun" were drawn to the American comic-like aspects of the series. Rather, it seems to me that Anime enthusiasts are largely drawn to the medium because they're fed up with presentation that defines comics in the States.

Q. Namerous of gun designs appear in your works. What do you find so fascinating about guns?

More than guns themselves, it's shooting-based combat that excites me. The explosion of gunpowder, the flying cartridges, the sounds of the weapons being discharged — more than anything though, it's the way guns are used in a situation that makes shooting-based combat so appealing to me.

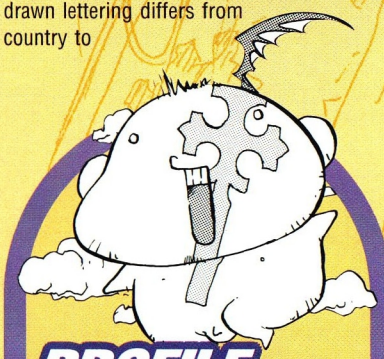
To be sure, I enjoy the design factor of guns. It would seem that actually knowing a lot about guns would hamper one's ability to effectively draw ones like those that appear in "Trigun" (laughs). For example, I first make sure that I have the basic elements in order — fuse placement, barrel position, discharge. The rest of the design I just make up as I go along, adding elements such as post-firing blowback and muzzle flash at the end.

Q. You even have guns transforming and stuff.

Gotta wonder about that, huh? (laughs) But I think a lot of us find that stuff cool — combining weapons, transforming them, stashing them, etc. Of course, in the "real" world, it's all pretty ridiculous (laughs).

Now that you mention it though, I do put a lot of emphasis on scenes involving weapon transformation, weapon slides, how they're handled. The poses of characters, particularly the way they hold their weapons, also receive a lot of my attention. In fact, what I sometimes do is envision how I want to do a particular situation, then work backwards to develop certain characters from there.

PROFILE



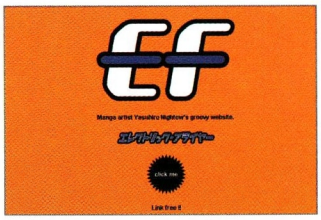
Nightow Yasuhiro debuted as a manga artist in 1994 with the release of the complete work "Call XXX". He followed suit with "Samurai Spirits" (1994), "Trigun" (1995), and "Trigun Maximum", which is currently serialized in Young King Our's magazine.

The unique dry touch evident in the artist's works such as "Trigun" remains Nightow's trademark, as does his detailed depiction of clothing and gadgets. Both have succeeded in capturing the attention of manga fans here in Japan.

OFFICIAL SITE

Electric Flier

http://din.or.jp/~nightow/



Run by Nightow Yasuhiro himself, this site features information on recent projects, a diary with related happenings, and a gallery with the artist's works on display. Check out the unpublished Nightow illustrations in the gallery!

CONT'D NEXT PAGE

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SHOOTOUTS WITH ALL THE INTENSITY OF A MOVIE: GUNGRAVE

Q. Tell us about your recent project, Gungrave.

Before "Gungrave," there were no games out there that let you engage in shooting action on the level of a motion picture. So, we set out to make one, and a real intense one at that. I think we got the job done pretty nicely.

Q. What part did you actually have in the game's making?

The original concept behind the game was my idea. I was also responsible for coordinating aspects such as the in-game movies and dialog, and had a direct hand in perfecting the polygon model textures.

As for character design, there was nothing out of the ordinary. However, since this game was a FPS (First-Person Shooter), we started developing the character as it looked from the back, seeing as that was to be the most visible angle throughout the game. We tried to make it a point to have the nature of the character come across from what the player saw of it from behind. Furthermore, as the movements of the character are all left to polygons once the character is drawn, there is a fine level of detail that can't be done with, say, manga. It's a good thing, too – a game like "Gungrave" left to manga design processes would be no cake walk (laughs).

Q. Finally, what do some of your future projects entail? Oh, and anything to say to your American fans?

Having just returned after a three-month vacation, I feel physically and mentally rejuvenated. The first order of business is to get back to the "Trigun" manga, which had been on hiatus while I was on vacation. I'm also currently working on a project with Red (the publisher of "Gungrave") that should be announced in a year or so. That's all I can tell you at this point.

I'm also pleased to announce in that the manga versions of both "Trigun" and "Trigun Maximum" will finally be translated into English to accompany the Italian and Spanish editions. I know we've kept our American fans waiting, and I hope they enjoy these English renditions once they become available.

–Thank you very much for your time.

WORK 2 GAMES

From the original planning to character design, "Gungrave" for PlayStation 2 has Nightow's fingerprints all over it. Designed to simulate intense shooting-based combat, the game's battle scenes featuring bullets flying all over the screen is sure to conjure up images of "The Matrix" and John Woo action films.

Legendary assassin Grave sets out to blow away a mysterious enemy group. Unleash a torrential rain of bullets on the enemy as you engage in maximum-intensity shooting action!

The Limited Edition release of Gungrave in Japan comes packed with this 11cm-tall Grave action figure featuring a detachable coffin.

WORK 3 TOYS

Busts of Vash and Knives. These among others cost ¥200 apiece in *gashapon*, small toy vending machines that randomize the toy that comes out.

What do you get when you cross Nightow's love for toys with the Japanese toy industry giant Kaiyodo? Introducing the "Toy Tribe" line! The first product line to come out of this joint effort is an action figure series based on the "Trigun" spinoff "Trigun The Planet Gunsmoke." Featuring original characters, the series captures a pseudo-Western flavor in the way only action figures can.

A number of variations of characters from the "Trigun" world are also in production, including a actual-size model of Vash's gun and an action figure line from McFarlane Toys.

Vash from "Trigun The Planet Gunsmoke." Note the minute differences in the gun and clothes from the original manga. Rare editions with different facial expressions also exist.

Here's the "Trigun The Planet Gunsmoke" version of Meryl, the heroine of the "Trigun" saga. Notice the details in the gadgets such as the typewriter and the holes in the sink.

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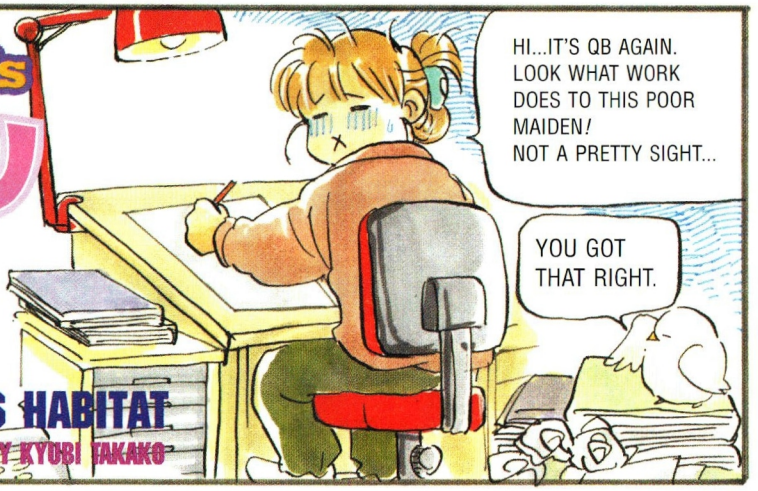
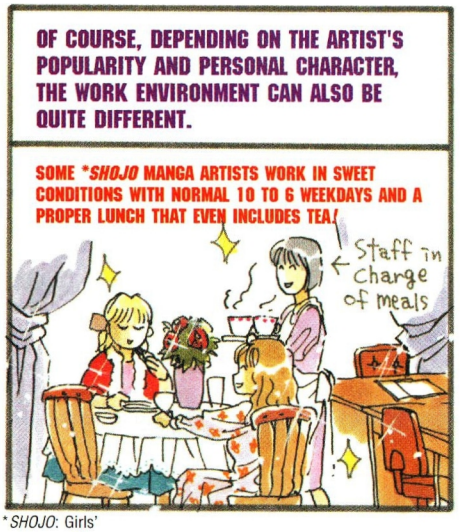
QB and VIVI's OTAKU can

ACT 2 A MANGA ARTIST'S HABITAT

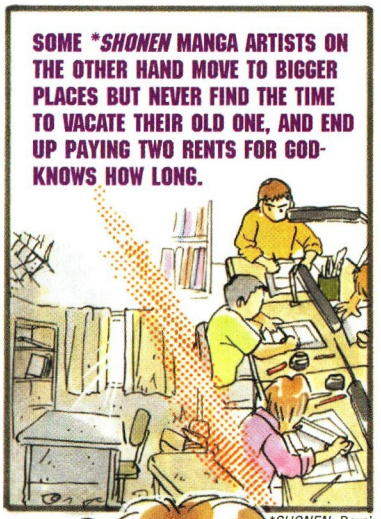
BY KYOBI TAKAKO



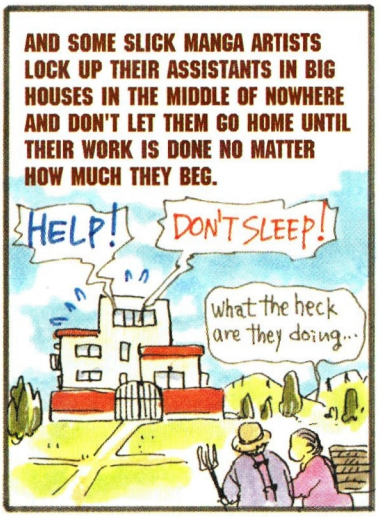
ONCE, I VISITED WILDSTORM STUDIOS IN LA JOLLA NEAR SAN DIEGO.
OMG! YOU CAN SEE THE SEA FROM HERE!!
THEY WORK IN SUCH HUGE ROOMS HERE???
IF IT WAS ME, I'D BE PLAYING AROUND OUTSIDE!

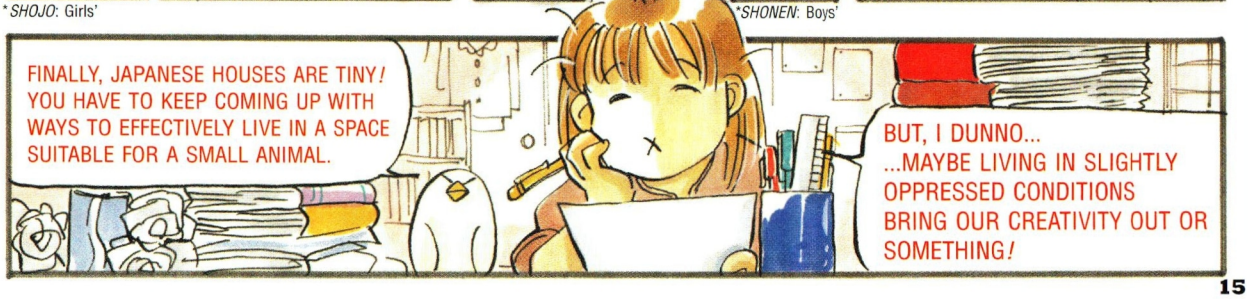

OF COURSE, DEPENDING ON THE ARTIST'S POPULARITY AND PERSONAL CHARACTER, THE WORK ENVIRONMENT CAN ALSO BE QUITE DIFFERENT.
SOME *SHOJO MANGA ARTISTS WORK IN SWEET CONDITIONS WITH NORMAL 10 TO 6 WEEKDAYS AND A PROPER LUNCH THAT EVEN INCLUDES TEA!
Staff in charge of meals

*SHOJO: Girls'


SOME *SHONEN MANGA ARTISTS ON THE OTHER HAND MOVE TO BIGGER PLACES BUT NEVER FIND THE TIME TO VACATE THEIR OLD ONE, AND END UP PAYING TWO RENTS FOR GOD-KNOWS HOW LONG.

*SHONEN: Boys'


AND SOME SLICK MANGA ARTISTS LOCK UP THEIR ASSISTANTS IN BIG HOUSES IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE AND DON'T LET THEM GO HOME UNTIL THEIR WORK IS DONE NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY BEG.
HELP!
DON'T SLEEP!
what the heck are they doing...


FINALLY, JAPANESE HOUSES ARE TINY! YOU HAVE TO KEEP COMING UP WITH WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY LIVE IN A SPACE SUITABLE FOR A SMALL ANIMAL.
BUT, I DUNNO... ...MAYBE LIVING IN SLIGHTLY OPPRESSED CONDITIONS BRING OUR CREATIVITY OUT OR SOMETHING!

SHIN-SANGOKU MUSOU 2: MOSHODEN

SUPER WARLORDS KICK MAJOR ENEMY ASS!

DATA
Publisher●KOEI Platform●PlayStation 2
Genre●Action
Release●Aug. 29, 2002
Price●¥3,980 (DVD-ROM)

The Japanese love the world of "Sangokushi." In fact, Japan may be the most "Sangokushi"-loving nation in the world. For readers who haven't heard much about it, "Sangokushi" is a historical tale set in China around the end of the Han Dynasty in the 3rd Century, when the Chinese Empire was in disarray. The basis for this historical story is the 24-volume tale "Sangokushi Engi," which details the actions of the leaders of three kingdoms in their struggle for supremacy: the three brothers of the Shu Kingdom (Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei), Cao Cao of the Wei Kingdom, and Sun Jian of the Wu Kingdom. In Japan, during the Edo Period (1603-1867), the books were translated into Japanese, and subsequently became the source of numerous sayings here. "Sangokushi" has been the subject of countless novels and manga, and history fans in Japan are as familiar with it as they are with their own.

Many history simulation games have been produced by Koei using "Sangokushi" as their basis. They have remade the game over and over, constantly improving on it. Koei's "Sangokushi" series contains incredibly detailed characters, and fans rate the games very highly. The "Shin Sangoku Musou" series uses the "Sangokushi" motif in a battle action game. In the U.S., it's known as "Dynasty Warriors 2 and 3."

The heroes from the "Sangokushi" era are written as if they had the power of several ordinary warlords. In the "Shin Sangoku Musou" series, you take the role of these valorous warlords, and, while defeating various opposing soldiers and warlords, try to take their commanders prisoner. But the numbers of enemy you face are far from usual. Often fighting alone, you must defeat a thousand or more soldiers while aiming for the warlords.

Fighting your way through such overwhelming odds builds up giddy excitement. This exhilarating feeling may be unique to this game. Each character has its own unique weapons and tactics, and deciding which warlord to play is something to look forward to. The swordplay is also something splendid. Mowing down enemies as you swing a weapon with all your might is sweet. It's also possible to charge up your strength and release it all at once in killing techniques. The preposterous strength of some of the characters is forgiven in this world!

Since version "2," item acquisition and weapons have been powered up, and it's now possible for characters to grow. Also, advanced level weapons have been introduced in **Mushoden**, far better than those in "Shin Sangoku Musou 2." The number of consecutive attacks you can make is now six, up from four, and defense has also been dramatically upgraded. For those who own "2," it is possible to use saved data from that game in **Moshoden**, and there is an expansion upgrade that can be used with either version. In version 2, the special technique known as "*gekimusouranbu*," could only be used with two players, but in the new version, one player can use it. It's also now possible to customize the troops you command, the type and appearance of soldiers, their names, and abilities. Just be careful not to fall in love with your own troops!

Also deserving special mention is the price. Where "Sangoku Musou 2" was ¥6,800, **Moshoden** is only ¥3,980. The game does have some minor imperfections and a few incomplete areas, but at this price, you just can't complain. The North American version will be available soon. For action game fans, this is one game you'll definitely want pick up.

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CLOSE-UP!

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EPISODE I&II

DATA

Publisher● SEGA Developer● SONICTEAM
Platform● Nintendo GameCube
Genre● RPG Release● In Stores Now
Price● US$49.95

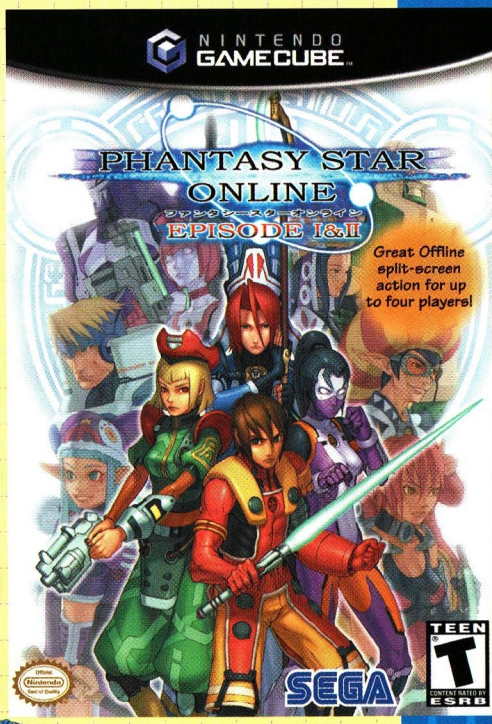
MUST-KNOW INFO ABOUT PSO!

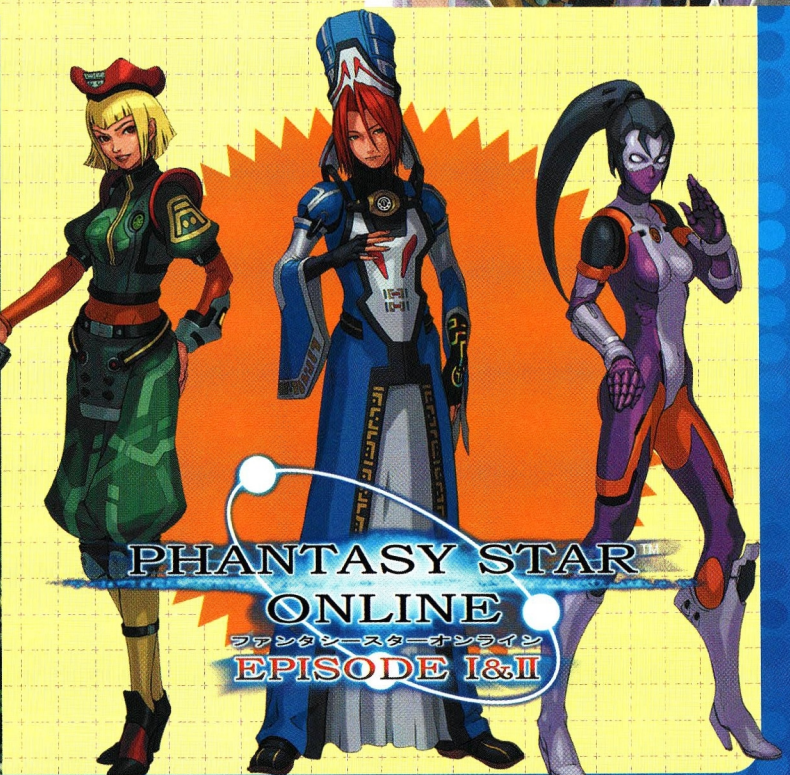
Continuing a previous article, we continue our coverage of **PHANTASY STAR ONLINE (PSO) EPISODE I & II**! In this issue, we'll link you up with some useful tips.

Tip #1: The appearance of Pumpkin-Headed Rappy!? Those of you who smirked while reading that last sentence are busted - you've been playing PSO too much! In one of the Halloween quests distributed in mid-October a woman asks for help feeding the children cake. If you accept the quest, Pumpkin-Headed Rappy appears as a rare enemy in the in the Jungle/Mountain/Seaside Area of this adventure. More seasonal quests and special events are scheduled to appear in the future ... Perhaps we'll see something for Christmas!? Get online now and check it out!

Tip #2: Work together to effectively build each other's experience points! When you band together to fight in multiplayer and online party games, the player who lands the killing blow receives 100% of that enemy's experience points! All other players who helped out receive 80% of the points. To ensure everyone in your group gets points, be sure that everyone lands at least one hit before landing the final blow. This way, low-level players can easily accumulate EP. Cooperation is definitely the name of the game in PSO.

Tip #3: Tips for finding rare special weapons. Much like PSO for the Dreamcast, players can find the legendary special weapons from red item boxes in the GameCube version as well. As the game's difficulty increases, do the odds of finding these weapons. Special weapons are obviously different from standard ones, and as you know, the difficulty involved in getting them makes them quite a status symbol in the PSO world. There're lots of hints abd shortcuts for obtaining the weapons online, so on get out there and get some!





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NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW

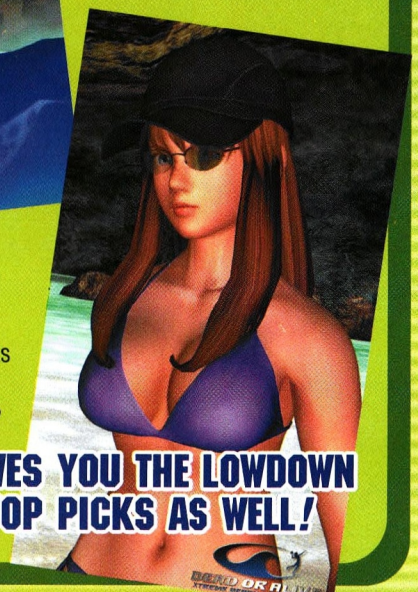
ISSUE #4

SPECIAL FEATURE

Count on RAIJIN G&A to bring you the dirt on the latest and greatest video games out of Japan!

GAME SHOW BLOWOUT!

With a string of big titles on the way, is the big "N" ready to go for broke in this generation's console war?



DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball made big waves among overseas attendees at this fall's TGS. Dose it hold up?

RAIJIN G&A GIVES YOU THE LOWDOWN ON ITS OTHER TOP PICKS AS WELL!

REGULER ARTICLES

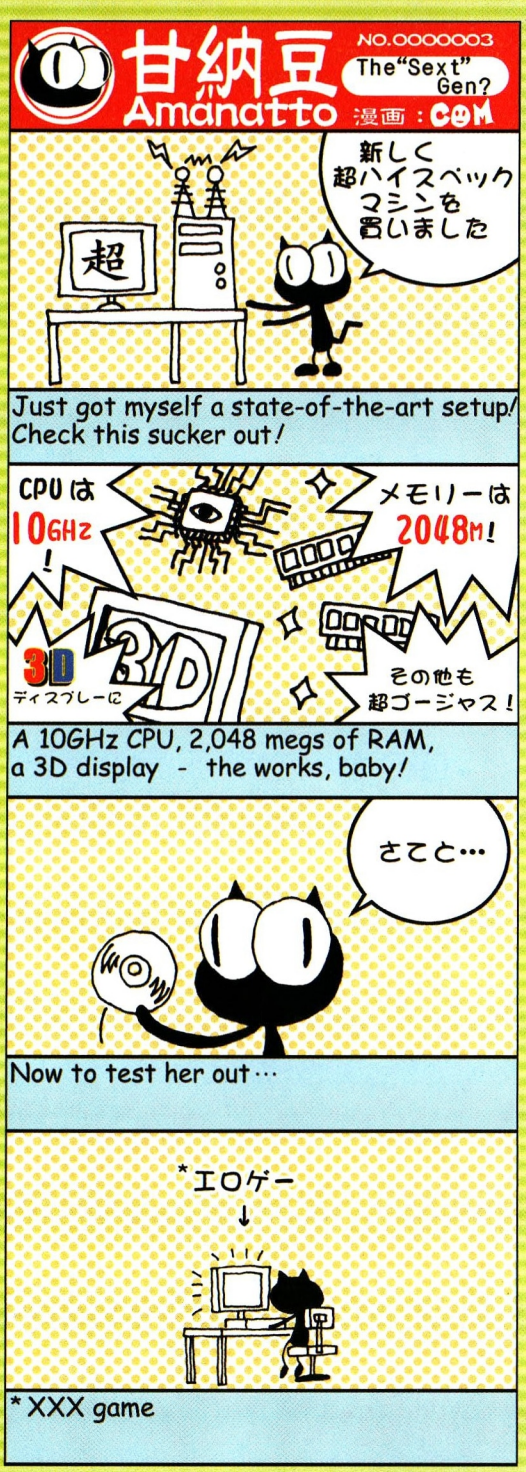
Anime Focus
G-ON RIDERS
PRINCESS TUTU

Game Focus
SPACE CHANNEL 5

Today's Topics
FINAL FANTASY X-2

SEGA OF AMERICA
HEDGEHOG EXPRESS
SHINOBI

...and more!!



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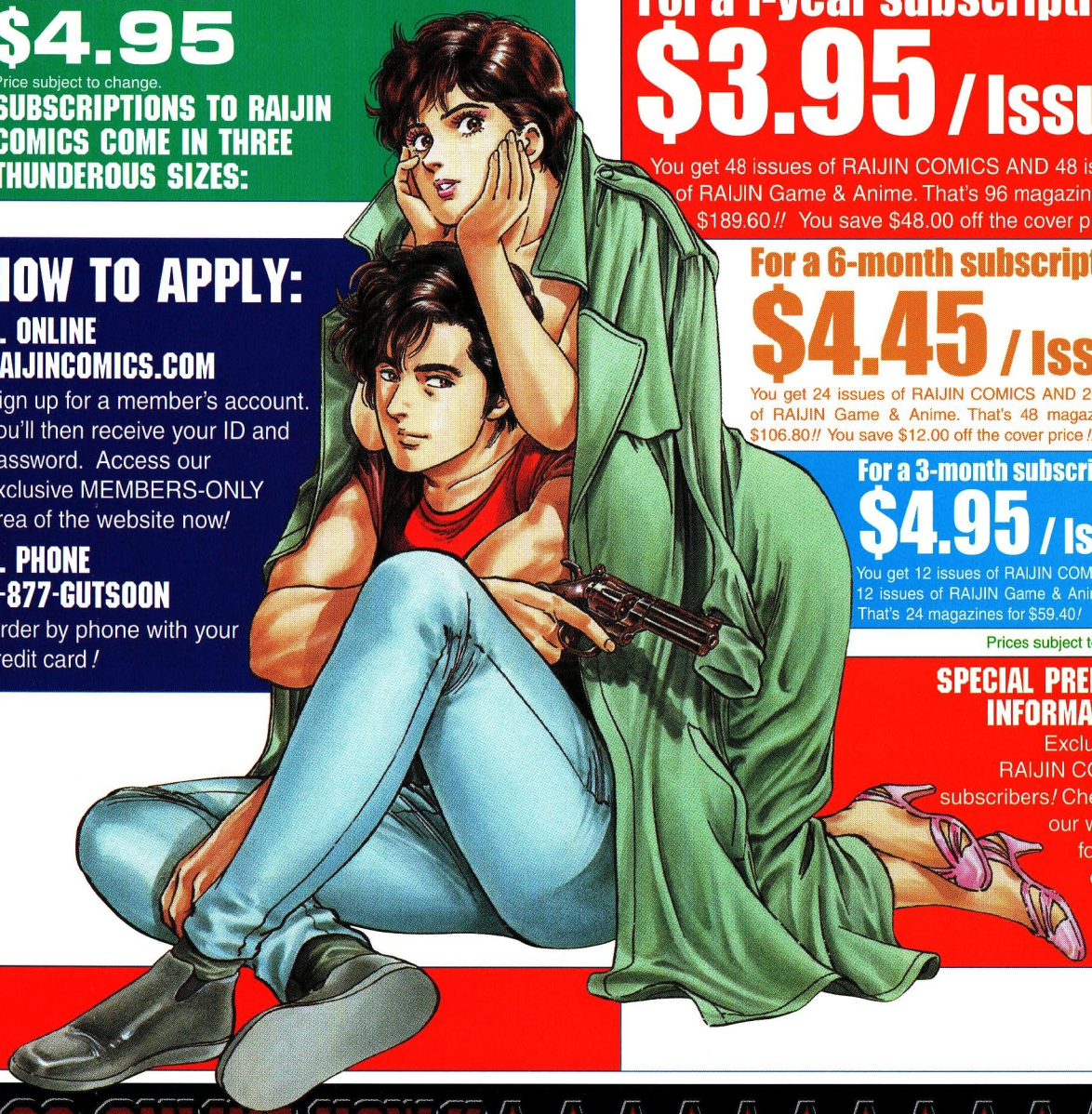

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